

## 5.—A new species of the genus *Ramphotyphlops* (Serpentes: Typhlopidae) from Western Australia

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### Abstract

A new species of *Ramphotyphlops* from Western Australia is described, and named *R. leptosoma*. The new species is shown to most closely resemble *R. minimus*, but to be distinguished from it by a number of characters.

### Introduction

In September 1967 Mr. R. B. Humphries collected two specimens of *Ramphotyphlops* at "The Loop", lower Murchison River, Western Australia. The snakes were given to Dr. G. M. Storr of the Western Australian Museum at Perth, who kindly sent them to me for examination. The specimens, one male and one female, proved to be of a previously unrecognised species, and is named and described below.

### *Ramphotyphlops leptosoma* new species

*Holotype*: R 29623 (male); "The Loop", lower Murchison River, Western Australia; 3rd September 1967; collected by Mr. Robert B. Humphries.

*Paratype*: R 29624 (female); same data as holotype.

*Diagnosis*: A small, thin-bodied snake of the genus *Ramphotyphlops* having:

- (1) 16 scale rows at mid-body;
- (2) 660 to 665 dorsal scales;
- (3) prominent snout, with obtusely angular horizontal edge;
- (4) inferior nostrils;
- (5) complete nasal cleft;
- (6) pale coloration throughout with little contrasting darker markings.

*Description of species*: Total length 250 to 282 mm; tail 4.5 times as long as broad in the male, and 2.5 times as long as broad in the female; diameter at mid-body 3.5 mm; dorsal scales (from rostral to terminal spine) 665 in the male, and 660 in the female; spine on tip of tail conical; 16 longitudinal rows of scales at all points posterior to head; four upper labials, first smallest and fourth largest; rostral very large, extending almost to the level of the eyes, rounded posteriorly, the portion visible from below broader than long, almost reaching nostril, concave at mouth edge; eye visible beneath

translucent ocular and preocular scales; preocular narrower than nasal or ocular, partly overlying eye anteriorly, its lower border in contact with second and third upper labials; ocular large, bordered above by supraocular and parietal, and posteriorly by two unmodified body scales, lower edge of ocular in contact with third and fourth upper labials; supraocular and parietal larger than unmodified dorsal scales; frontal smaller than unmodified dorsal scales; nasal divided by nasal cleft into small antero-ventral portion and large postero-dorsal portion; antero-ventral nasal in contact with first and second upper labials; postero-dorsal nasal extending on to top of snout between rostral anteriorly and preocular and supraocular posteriorly, in contact with prefrontal dorsally; nasal cleft extending from lower border of nasal, in contact with second upper labial, through nostril, to meet lateral border of rostral on ventral surface; snout prominent, with obtusely angular horizontal edge, forming a ridge; nostrils inferior; five lower labials, the first and third smallest, fourth and fifth largest.

Colour generally pale throughout, dorsal surface pale grey/brown, undersurface grey/white.

*Range*: Known only from the Murchison River area, Western Australia.

*Relationships*: In characters of bodily scalation and proportions *R. leptosoma* most closely resembles *R. minimus*; these being the only two Australian species so far described with 16 mid-body scale rows, and small, slender bodies. The two are distinguishable from each other on the basis of the shape of the snout (angular in *leptosoma*, blunt in *minimus*); size of the rostral (smaller in *leptosoma* than *minimus*); the disposition of the nasal cleft (which reaches the rostral in *leptosoma* but not in *minimus*), and the colour (fairly uniformly pale in *leptosoma*, while *minimus* has an almost black head and tail or tail only, and yellowish brown body distinctly marked with dark longitudinal lines).

### Acknowledgement

I wish to offer my sincere thanks to Dr. G. M. Storr, of the Western Australian Museum for allowing me the privilege of examining and describing these specimens.

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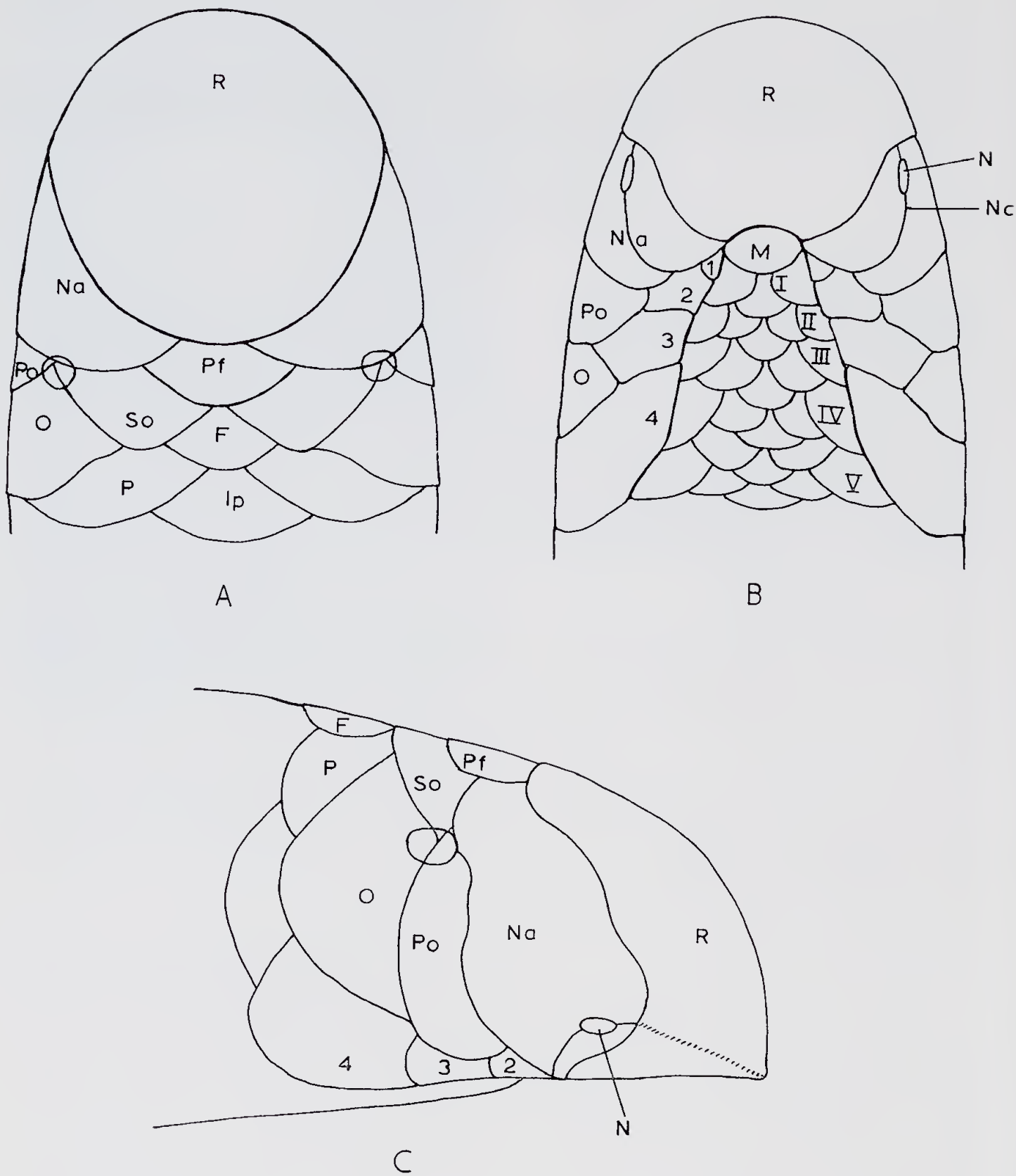


Figure 1.—Head of *Ramphotyphlops leptosoma* new species. A.—Dorsal view. B.—Ventral view. C.—Lateral view. F, frontal; Ip, interparietal; M, mental; N, nostril; Na, nasal; Nc, nasal cleft; O, ocular; P, parietal; Pf, prefrontal; Po, preocular; R, rostral; So, supraocular; 1-4, upper labials; I-V, lower labials.